

Peacemakers

Brief Program Description

Peacemakers is a curriculum-based violence prevention program for upper elementary and middle school students. It is based on an 18-lesson psychoeducational curriculum delivered by teachers or other youth-serving professionals. The curriculum teaches students positive attitudes and values related to violence, and trains youth in conflict-related psychosocial skills such as anger management, problem solving, assertiveness, communication, and conflict resolution. The program consists of more than delivery of the curriculum; in addition, school staff use a variety of procedures to infuse program principles and techniques into the everyday culture of the school. While the focus of the intervention is on primary prevention for all students, there is also a Counselor's Manual to guide remedial work for youth referred because of aggressive behavior.

The Peacemakers program content is based mostly on studies of psychosocial variables associated with individual differences in aggression and on existing interventions (either preventive or remedial) with evidence of effectiveness. The curriculum addresses: 1) broad causal factors discerned in past research on the psychology of violence, for example, beliefs supporting the acceptability and utility of violent behavior; and 2) deficits in conflict-related psychosocial skills. Thus, the program focuses on what students want to do and on what they can do.

Program Strategies

The intervention begins with several sessions on violence-related attitudes, values, and self-concept issues. Then there are sessions on anger management, self-perception, conflict avoidance and resolution, problem solving, communication, assertive behavior, and work on resisting negative peer pressure and acting as an agent of positive peer pressure.

The program includes a variety of classroom activities, including didactic instruction, discussion, use of the Socratic method, role-plays, handouts with graphic design, and experiential exercises. The curriculum includes a series of stories, with accompanying writing exercises, written for the program by a children's author. This component of reading and writing facilitates the integration of the program into the academic mission of schools.

Population Focus

Peacemakers is targeted toward upper elementary and middle school students.

Suitable Settings

The intervention was developed and evaluated in school settings, and can also be used in other settings for young people (mental health, juvenile justice, after-school programs).

Required Resources

The curriculum includes a Leader's Manual for group work, a Counselor's Manual for individual work, and a Handbook for students.

Implementation Timeline

The intervention is based on an 18-lesson curriculum delivered by teachers or other professionals. Each lesson takes about 45 minutes to conduct.

Outcomes

Evaluation of this program revealed the following:

- Student self-reports indicated that, from pretest to posttest, the intervention group showed an increase in knowledge of psychosocial skills, compared to the controls.
- Student self-reports indicated that, from pretest to posttest, the intervention group showed a decrease in self-reported aggressive behavior, compared to the controls.
- Teacher reports indicated that, from pretest to posttest, the intervention was associated with a 41% decrease in disciplinary incidents involving aggressive behaviors, and 67% fewer suspensions for violent behavior.

Contact Information

For indepth information on this program, please use the contact listed below.

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